

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSC-01 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04  
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AMEMBASSY SOFIA  
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USEC BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 3665

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, UR  
SUBJECT: RECENT LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENTS

1. SUMMARY. MOST STRIKING AMONG RECENT LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENTS IS KATUSHEV'S MARCH 16 APPOINTMENT AS DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS AND AS SOVIET REPRESENTATIVE TO CEMA. FORMER CEMA REPRESENTATIVE LESHECHKO APPARENTLY WILL KEEP HIS TITLE OF DEPUTY CM CHAIRMAN AND WILL BE GIVEN NEW RESPONSIBILITIES. THE KEY QUESTION OF KATUSHEV'S FUTURE AS A MEMBER OF THE CPSU CENTRAL LEADERSHIP IS UNCLEAR  
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AND PROBABLY WILL REMAIN SO AT LEAST UNTIL THE NEXT CC PLENUM. OTHER DEVELOPMENTS INCLUDE BREZHNEV'S NON-APPEARANCE AT WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN AN AWARD CEREMONY IN HIS HONOR, ANOTHER REVIEW OF KIRILENKO'S COLLECTED WORKS, THE FILLING OF A HIGH-LEVEL VACANCY IN BELORUSSIA, AND A RUMOR THAT KOMOSOMOL CHIEF TYAZHEL'NIKOV MAY SOON BE SHIFTED TO THE STATE

COMMITTEE FOR RADIO AND TELEVISION. END SUMMARY.

2. THE FIRST NEWS OF KATUSHEV'S APPOINTMENT AS DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS CAME IN TWO BRIEF TASS ANNOUNCEMENTS THE EVENING OF MARCH 16. THE "VREMYA" TV NEWS PROGRAM FOR THAT EVENING CARRIED THE ANNOUNCEMENTS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE PROGRAM, AND SCREENED A LARGE PHOTO OF KATUSHEV AS THE NEWS WAS READ. PRAVDA MARCH 17 CARRIED A SMALL FRONT-PAGE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE FIRST APPOINTMENT, AND AN EVEN SMALLER BACK-PAGE ITEM ON KATUSHEV'S APPOINTMENT TO THE CEMA JOB. NEITHER PRAVDA NOR THE OTHER CENTRAL PAPERS RAN KATUSHEV'S PICTURE.

3. THE MARCH 17 PAPERS ALSO CARRIED A BRIEF ITEM NOTING THAT THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS HAD FREED DEPUTY CHAIRMAN LESECHKO OF HIS DUTIES AS CEMA REPRESENTATIVE.

4. FRG AMBASSADOR SAHM TOOK ADVANTAGE OF A MARCH 17 FAREWELL CALL ON FIRST DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF THE CM TIKHONOV TO ASK IF KATUSHEV WOULD STAY ON AS CC SECRETARY. TIKHONOV REPORTEDLY DID NOT ANSWER THE QUESTION, ALTHOUGH HE DID SAY SOMETHING TO THE EFFECT THAT KATUSHEV WAS A RELATIVELY YOUNG MAN, WAS NOW MOVING INTO A NEW FIELD, SHOULD BE GIVEN A CHANCE AND THE "WE'LL SEE". WE UNDERSTAND AMB SAHM CAME AWAY FROM THE MEETING UNCLEAR AS TO THE EFFECT OF THE NEW APPOINTMENT UPON KATUSHEV'S STANDING IN THE LEADERSHIP.

5. DURING HIS MARCH 17 MEETING WITH USA INSTITUTE  
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DIRECTOR ARBATOV, AMBASSADOR TOON ASKED ARBATOV ABOUT THE KUTUSHEV APPOINTMENT. ARBATOV SAID IT WAS NOT REALLY HIS FIELD, BUT SPECULATED THAT KATUSHEV WAS NAMED TO REPLACE LESECHKO BECAUSE THE LATTER WAS GETTING OLD AND LACKED TECHNICAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT CEMA JOB, WHILE KATUSHEV HAD TECHNICAL QUALIFICATIONS AS WELL AS POLITICAL CONTACTS IN THE CEMA MEMBER COUNTRIES. ARBATOV NOTED THAT IF PRECEDENT WERE FOLLOWED, KATUSHEV PROBABLY WOULD RELINQUISH HIS SECRETARIAT POSITION AT THE NEXT CC PLENUM.

6. IN OTHER DEVELOPMENTS:

--BREZHNEV PASSED UP AN OPPORTUNITY TO HAVE ANOTHER MEDAL PINNED ON BY NOT ATTENDING THE MARCH 2 ANNUAL MEETING OF THE SOVIET ACADEMY OF SCIENCES; BURIED IN THE TASS ACCOUNT OF THE MEETING WAS PARAGRAPH TO THE EFFECT THAT AN PRESIDENT ALEKSANDROV'S ANNOUNCEMENT OF BREZHNEV'S RECEIVING THE ACADEMY'S GOLD MEDAL FOR EXCELLENCE IN

SOCIAL SCIENCE WAS GREETED WITH STORMY APPLAUSE; ALTHOUGH THE AWARD WAS FIRST ANNOUNCED LAST DECEMBER, IN CONNECTION WITH BREZHNEV'S 70TH BIRTHDAY, SO FAR AS WE KNOW THE MEDAL HAS NOT YET BEEN FORMALLY PRESENTED; WE RECALL THAT AT THE AN'S 1976 ANNUAL MEETING SUSLOV WAS PRESENTED THE SAME MEDAL AND TOOK THE OCCASION TO MAKE A MAJOR SPEECH;

--KIRILENKO'S BOOK OF COLLECTED WORKS, FIRST REVIEWED IN PRAVDA LAST SEPTEMBER, IS THE SUBJECT OF A LENGTHY, UNSIGNED REVIEW ARTICLE IN THE MARCH ISSUE OF THE CC JOURNAL "KOMMUNIST;" THE ARTICLE IS FULL OF PRAISE FOR BREZHNEV ("THE OUTSTANDING POLITICAL FIGURE OF MODERN TIMES," ETC.) AND POINTS OUT THAT KIRILENKO "TAKES DIRECT AND ACTIVE PART IN WORKING OUT AND IMPLEMENTING THE GREAT PLANS OF CONSTRUCTING COMMUNISM, OF INTERNAL AND FOREIGN POLICY;" THE PIECE SEEMS CALCULATED TO BOOST KIRILENKO'S STANDING  
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AND TO EMPHASIZE HIS CLOSE TIES TO BREZHNEV, AS WAS THE CASE WITH THE SEPTEMBER 1976 PRAVDA ARTICLE;  
--THE BELORUSSIAN GROUP OF PARTY AND GOVERNMENT LEADERS CENTERING AROUND MAZUROV AND MASHEROV SEEMS TO HAVE SUCCEEDED IN FILLING THE VACANT JOB OF CHAIRMAN OF THE BELORUSSIAN SUPREME SOVIET PRESIDUM WITH ONE OF THEIR OWN; PRAVDA MARCH 1 ANNOUNCED THAT MINSK OBKOM FIRST SECRETARY AND LONGTIME BELORUSSIAN CP APPARATCHIK I.YE. POLYAKOV HAD BEEN GIVEN THE JOB;

--AN INFORMED SOVIET SOURCE TELLS US THAT KOMSOMOL FIRST SECRETARY TYAZHEL'NIKOV WILL SOON BECOME CHAIRMAN OF THE STATE COMMITTEE FOR RADIO AND TELEVISION; THE INCUMBENT, S.G. LAPIN, REPORTEDLY WILL BE NAMED AS SOVIET AMBASSADOR TO SPAIN.

7. COMMENT: THE POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF KATUSHEV'S APPOINTMENT AS DEPUTY CM CHAIRMAN AND CEMA REPRESENTATIVE SEEMS TO HINGE UPON WHETHER HE WILL RETAIN HIS PRESENT POSITION AS CC SECRETARY. IF HE DOES NOT, THE SHIFT MUST BE REGARDED AS A DEMOTION FOR KATUSHEV AND A POSSIBLE SET-BACK FOR THE BREZHNEV FACTION (SINCE KATUSHEV IS CONSIDERED A BREZHNEV PROTEGE). AS ARBATOV NOTED, PRECEDENT WOULD SUGGEST THAT KATUSHEV WILL NOT CONTINUE IN THE SECRETARIAT, YET THAT SAME PRECEDENT APPARENTLY HAS NOT HELD TRUE FOR USTINOV, WHO SEEMS TO HAVE RETAINED HIS SECRETARIAT POSITION AFTER HIS APPOINTMENT AS MINISTER OF DEFENSE. AND A SIMILAR PRECEDENT--THAT FIRST DEPUTY CHAIRMEN OF THE CM ALSO HOLD A POSITION IN THE PARTY LEADERSHIP--HAS NOT BEEN FOLLOWED IN THE CASE OF TIKHONOV.

8. IF KATUSHEV DOES REMAIN IN THE SECRETARIAT, HE WOULD BE IN A STRONG POSITION TO INFLUENCE ECONOMIC AS WELL AS POLITICAL RELATIONS BETWEEN THE USSR AND ITS CEMA PARTNERS, AND HE PRESUMABLY WOULD DO SO ON BEHALF OF THE BREZHNEV GROOUP, AS OPPOSED TO KOSYGIN'SOR SUSLOV'S PERSONAL FOLLOWERS.  
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9. IN ANY EVENT, LESECHKO'S REPLACEMENT BY A RELATIVELY YOUNGER MAN WITH EXTENSIVE POLITICAL EXPERIENCE COULD SIGNAL NEW SOVIET EMPHASIS ON CEMA. AND, AS IS SO OFTEN THE CASE IN PERSONNEL SHIFTS OF THIS SORT, THE FULL POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF MOVE PROBABLY WILL REMAIN MURKY AT LEAST UNTIL THE NEXT CC PLENUM.  
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Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
22 May 2009  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009